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Agenda item 5

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITH REGARD TO WOMEN

Letter dated 7 August 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the decree* of the Republic of Azerbaijan on implementation of the national gender policy in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would be grateful if you could circulate the present letter and the above-mentioned decree as an official document of the fifty-second session of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights under item 5 of the agenda.

(Signed) Isfandiyar VAHABZADA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* The annex is reproduced as received, in English only.

Annex

Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY IN REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijani womankind with its magnanimity and purity and fidelity played an exceptional role in the living of our society, the formation for national and moral values system of our nation. An artistic reflection of beautiful feminine characters, distinguishing with high morality is given in the patterns of public works, in our ancient legends and dastans (epic poems). Feminine characters described in "Kitabi Dede Korgud", which is the fundamental book of our morality, still serve with their dignity to the triumph of human ideals.

Azerbaijan reality had given poets and thinkers a rich historical material for laudation of woman as a source of life and personification of wisdom. Genius Nizami in his compositions created characters of such female-sovereigns as Mekhinbanu and Nushaba, and legendary Fitne, and seven beauties. Mausoleum of Momine khatun erected by outstanding architect Adjemi Nakhchivani, is not only an imposing monument, but a brilliant demonstration of our nation's respect to womankind. In Medieval Ages that were important phase in the development of Azerbaijani culture and science, activities of Azerbaijani womankind had been done for preservation and enrichment of national and cultural traditions of our nation. Poetical majlises of Mekhseti Gandjevi, who was one of the prominent figures in poetry of the twelfth century, glorified the name of Azerbaijani woman far beyond the bounds of Motherland.

Names of political and states people - mothers and wives and daughters of Azerbaijani rulers, such as of Gatiba khanim, the wife of Gizil Arslan, Mekhrdjan khanim - the wife of Uzbek khan, Mekhinbanu - the daughter of Ismail Khatayi Shah, Peri khanim, the wife of Shirvanshah Khalilullah, Kheyransa Beyim, the mother of Shah Abbas, legendary Tuti Bike and others are recalled with great respect.

The XIX-Th century is characterized by activity and great creative successes of womankind in Azerbaijan. Works of Khurshud Banu Natavan, Aga Beyim Aga Adjemi, Gonchebeyim, and Fatma khanim Kamina, Shahnigyar Garabagi, and others also attract attention. Political and economical and cultural processes, have taken place in Azerbaijan since that century, had given high-power pulse to enlightenment of women and their more active participation in common living. Creation of secular theatre, democratic press and schools in native language, schools for girls and feminine gymnasiums had opened new horizons for comprehensive development of Azeri women. Important place in that period, along with enlightenment, had been given to charity. Female charity societies, created by Govkhar khanim Gadjar, Hamida khanim Javanshir, Nigyar khanim Shikhlnskaya, Mesma khanim Talyshinskaya, Saltanat khanim Ahmedova were making a great deal of work.

Majestic monument of that period, the Tazapir had also been built by Nabat khanim Ashurbeyly-Rzayeva, as one of those charity actions. As a logical result of that work, for the first time in our history, women were enfranchised.

During the period of Soviet authority Azerbaijani womankind had also passed through the extremely difficult and glorious path. Female emancipation, liquidation of illiteracy among women at the earliest possible dates, junction of women to the professions of teacher, doctor, engineer and poet, possession of the equal rights with men and possibility for realization of their talents and abilities in the society had become the main achievements of that period.

The year 1921 went down in history of Azerbaijan as the first Woman's Convention year. The convention's main idea, where Nariman Narimanov gave a report, was the concept of woman's liberation. Great work had been done in the field of enlightenment of Azerbaijani women and the growth of their public activity for a very short time since convention. Pre-school training institution that was created in 1921, one year later was transformed into the Higher Feminine Teacher's Training University. The first woman's club, created by the initiative of Jeyran Bayramova, had played important role in the development of woman's movement during that period. Publication of the "Sharg gadiny"(Oriental woman) magazine in 1923 became a significant event in the history of woman's movement in Azerbaijan.

World War II gave impulse to wider attraction of women to labor. Women substituted men who left for war, in the several fields. During that period Leila Mamedbekova, Zuleyha Seidamedova and Sona Nuriyeva who were the women pilots and Shovket Salimova who was a shipping captain appeared in Azerbaijan. Our women doughtily fought on the front line, demonstrated the working valor and the selflessness in home front. These all are the unforgettable pages in the history of woman's movement in Azerbaijan.

Progress of Azerbaijani women during the Soviet authority in the fields of science and culture is a ponderable demonstration, argumentative of their great talent and diligence. The skilled masters at theatrical scene - Marzia Davudova, Fatma Gadri, Hokuma Gurbanova, Munavver Kalantarli, Barat Shekinskaya, Leila Badirbayly, Nasiba Zeynalova, Shafiga Mamedova and Amalya Panahova, Azerbaijani ballet stars - Gamar Almaszadeh, Leila Vekilova and Rafiga Akhundova, our favorite singers - Shovket Mamedova, Agigat Rzayeva, Shovket Alekperova, Sara Gadimova, Rubaba Muradova, Fatma Mekhraliyeva, Tukezban Ismailova and Zeynab Khanlarova, our prominent composers - Agabadji Rzayeva, Shafiga Akhundova, Firangiz Alizadeh.
Our eminent women artists, such as Vadjiya Samedova, Reykhan Topchibasheva, Gulli Mustafayeva, Elmira Shahtahtinskaya, Maral Rahmanzadeh, made a vast contribution into the development of our national culture. Women poets and writers of Azerbaijan - Nigyar Rafibeyli, Mirvarid Dilbazi, Medina Gulgyun, Hokuma Billuri, Aziza

Jafarzadeh, Kanimana Azizbeyly had also left an ineffaceable scent in the evolution of Azeri literature.

Azerbaijani woman's conventions that took part in 1957, 1967 and 1972 also played an important role in the evolution of Azerbaijani woman's movement, for being more organized.

In the XX-th century Azerbaijani women, in a short space of time passed the path of evolution equal to centenaries. There had been made the drastic changes in their position in society, public life and family.

Stereotypes shaped in the Soviet period, along with achievements, in a number of cases left out of account the national and traditional peculiarities, the characters that peculiar to women. A number of factors in the Soviet concept on solution of gender issues and their development, were set aside. Forms and index of occupancy were stirred up and there was forgotten the quality of work and its compliance to the internal needs of womankind, and the possibility to show the potential in work.

Azerbaijani women were in the first ranks of upholders, following the path of independence. Women were taking part in complex processes, which have been taking place in our republic since 1988 equally with men. There were women also, among the victims of sanguinary tragedy that was made by the Soviet troops in Baku and other cities and regions of the republic, January 19 and 20, 1990. The journalist Salatin Askerova and Gultekin Askerova, the doctor, perished at the Karabakh front line are National Heroes of Azerbaijan and had become the symbol of selflessness for a new period. There is a great deal of women among a million of citizens of Azerbaijan, forcedly expatriated by Armenian aggressors from their homeland as a result of occupation of 20% of Azerbaijan land. The main problems, caused by the consequences of the Karabakh war, settled on the shoulders of mothers, sisters and brides. In the course of existent complex of social and political processes in the republic Azeri women, at every turn appealing to the peace and serenity, were always speaking from the positions of nationality.

The first Constitution of an independent Republic of Azerbaijan, adopted in 1995 assigned the equal rights for men and women created the legal basis for its active participation in the process of democratic state creation.

Seizing the process of democratization, taking place in our society, women in a short time created women societies, meeting the requirements of a new period. As their main aim, the women organizations implementing activities in the national scale mark out improvements in the status of womankind in Azerbaijan, solution of its social and economical problems and other issues. And now more and more new women organizations are being formed, and existent organizations extend their field of activities.

In the period of preparation for the 4th World Women Conference, which took place in Beijing in 1995, National Women Committee, functioning in Azerbaijan prepared and submitted a nation-wide report to the Beijing conference. After conference the debates and conferences concerned with nation-wide platforms of activity took place there. On the 30th of June 1995 Republic of Azerbaijan undertook the proper commitments joining to the UN Convention "On the elimination of all forms of discrimination against to women". A huge work had been done in the field of implementation of principles and recommendations, mentioned in its documents within five years passed after the Beijing conference, and proper UN structures submitted reports about that.

Statistic data, obtained as a result of realization of Decree on women representation in different fields of activity, in some ministries and institutions and companies, and in the system of public administration on the whole demonstrated that only 5 heads of executive authority of cities and regions, out of more than 80 are women. And even in state structures and different professional spheres where the majority of employees are women, they are faintly represented on the decision-making positions. There are 5 departments on education and 8 departments on public health where the overwhelming numbers of employees are women, and which are headed by women.

The legislative acts, decisions and resolutions, adopted on different levels in the Republic and particularly decisions, adopted in the Cabinet of Ministers, certain ministries and departments often don't pass through the expertise from the standpoints of gender politics requirements.

Period of post-restoration of Azerbaijan's national independence set the new aims and tasks for women. Formation of the market economy and reforms implemented in the different sectors of our country and the work, induced to boost the activity of citizens in formation of civil society require the acceleration of the role of women in society. Thereupon there should be mentioned that provision of equal rights to women often is not implemented by virtue of absence of the real equal oppórtunities.

Necessity of women problems solution was emphasized at the first Azerbaijan women convention, which took place in September 25, 1998. Convention had demonstrated that in course of complex social and political processes, which had taken place in the Republic, Azerbaijani women are always speaking from the positions of nationality and had demonstrated that there was much work to do in the field of acceleration of women role in the society.

With a view to provide in practice equality between women and men and particularly for their representation in the system of public administration on proper level I ordain the following:

1. To provide an equal representation of women and men on the supervisory level in all state structures of the Republic of Azerbaijan, taking into account a field of activity.

2. To prepare a statistical information up to international standards on the women status in the republic by the State Committee on Statistics, jointly with the State Committee on women issues.

3. Charge the Cabinet of Ministers:

- Assure in practice, in the network of implemented economical reforms, creation of equal opportunities for women, on a par with men, guided by the requirements of a gender policy;

- With a view to provide employment for female refugees and internally displaced persons to prepare and implement the employment programme;

- With a view to enforce the women rights protection and submit the certain amendments and annexes in the legislation of the Republic of Azerbaijan, to analyze the acting legislation and to make suggestions on that;

- Annually up to the 1st of March submit the report on the course of implementation of the current Decree;

- Solve the other issues arising from the current Decree.

Heydar Aliyev,
President of the Republic of Azerbaijan.
06/03/2000, Baku
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